

# Somalia: Potential Home for the al Qaeda Terror Network

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Subject Area Strategic Issues

## Executive Summary

**Title:** Somalia: Potential Home for the al Qaeda Terror Network

**Author:** Lieutenant Commander Kenneth T. Wilson

**Thesis:** Since their dislodgement from Afghanistan, the remaining members of al Qaeda will need a new safe haven. Somalia is a likely potential refuge for the transnational terrorist organization.

**Discussion:** During Operation Enduring Freedom the United States and its coalition partners aggressively pursued the al Qaeda terror network and its members resulting in the killing or capture of many of the group's members. The rest were dispersed and dislodged from their strongholds in the Afghanistan mountain ranges. Though the U.S. and its allies eroded much of al Qaeda's capabilities the group still has the ability to function and project its influence as a worldwide transnational umbrella organization.

Operating as a shell of its former constitution the group has been put on the run and will need a new place of refuge. Where will the organization seek this asylum? One plausible answer is Somalia. It is largely ungoverned with characteristics that make it quite attractive to al Qaeda. Somalia is conducive for the group to easily settle, support and rebuild itself. Additionally, Somalia is quite familiar to al Qaeda considering the organization has preexisting relationships within the country dating back to the early 1990s.

**Conclusion:** Somalia appears to be a likely refuge for the group. It seems to have all the trappings that al Qaeda leaders and operatives need as a safe haven. Staying a step ahead of the organization is vitally important in preventing the organization from reconstituting there. The focus must engage the three primary divisions of society - the government, the military and the populace. This must occur across all social barriers in Somalia and any country the group may seek to infiltrate.

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
History of al Qaeda in Somalia.....	4
Operation Restore Hope.....	4
The Somali <i>Fatwa</i> .....	6
Personal Claims Against the U.S. in Somalia.....	7
The Current Picture of Somalia.....	8
Somali Government.....	8
Somali Factional Clannism.....	9
Lawlessness and Criminality.....	10
Radical Islam in Somalia.....	13
Al-Ittihad al-Islamiya.....	13
AIAI and the Factious Groups.....	15
The al Qaeda Connection.....	17
Al Qaeda Since Operation Restore Hope.....	20
The Sudan.....	20
Return to Afghanistan.....	21
Where Will al Qaeda Go Next.....	22
Why Somalia Looks Attractive for al Qaeda.....	27
Ease of Access.....	27
Absence of Law and a Centralized Government.....	29
Lack of Economic Base.....	30
Previously Established Relationships.....	31

Evidence of Recent al Qaeda Links to Somalia.....	34
What Must Be Done to Stop the Resurgence.....	37
Somalia's Neighbors.....	37
Strengthen Neighboring Militaries.....	42
In Conclusion.....	44
Bibliography.....	47

# SOMALIA: POTENTIAL HOME FOR THE AL QAEDA TERROR NETWORK

## Introduction

The foremost threat to peace and stability worldwide is terrorism. It is the tool used by groups attempting to change or disrupt a way of life through intimidation and fear. There are many motivations that drive terrorist organizations but most are aimed at governmental institutions or groups of individuals holding positions of power. Terrorists who fall into this group seek to interrupt that power or claim a piece of it.

Many terrorist organizations tend to operate in specific geographic regions or within state boundaries and attempt to only affect a particular group within that area while seeking limited aims. However, the most menacing form of terrorism is that which has no regard for geographic borders and seeks to influence change on a global scale, oftentimes with unrealistic and brutal goals in mind. Generally, such transnational terrorists groups have a network of cells in several countries worldwide that are affiliated by a common ideology or philosophy. They often have an established hierarchy beginning with a strong and highly respected central leader. The most vital element of the group is a strong financial network to support their worldwide organization and global aims. This

financial base enables the group to procure the necessary assets to maintain their international infrastructure.

One such organization and possibly the most highly reputed group is al Qaeda, The Base.<sup>1</sup> Al Qaeda and its rich and enigmatic leader, Osama bin Laden, has taken part in, been blamed for or taken credit for some of the most heinous terrorist attacks in history. Al Qaeda coordinated and carried out these attacks through the use of their worldwide network of cells. The latest attacks on 11 September 2001 prompted retaliatory strikes from the U.S. and coalition partners against al Qaeda and Taliban strongholds in Afghanistan. The strikes were thought to have mangled the organization and dislodged them from their bases in the Afghan mountains. This was brought out in the following statement made by a high-ranking U.S. official:

*They [bin Laden and al Qaeda] can no longer conceive a new operation in Afghanistan.... We have basically eviscerated their capacity to project power outside Afghanistan. They are now in a survival-only mode.... Unable to communicate with their global cells, two [bin Laden and Zawahiri] constantly move from cave to brick hut to cave, their survival severely disrupted. About all they can do is hide out and not get caught. They are not in a position to conduct operations.*

**Unnamed U.S. officials and a retired**  
*U.S. Army Lieutenant General*  
*December 2001-January 2002*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anonymous, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Inc., 2003), 273.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Rowan in "Al Qaeda Now in 'Survival Only Mode'", *Washington Times*, 3 December 2001.

During the war in Afghanistan many of al Qaeda's members were killed or captured, leaving the group severely degraded. Remaining members were displaced and set on the run, making Afghanistan unsafe as a refuge. Even though much of their capacity was diminished they are still a viable terrorist organization looking for a new base of operation and means to exact terrorist acts around the world. Where will they go?

This paper will attempt to address this question. Succinctly, it will outline why Somalia is a possible home base for al Qaeda. It will address the historical involvement of al Qaeda in Somalia, particularly its relationship to the Somali-based Islamic organization, al-Ittihad al-Islamiya or the Islamic Unity Party.<sup>3</sup> It will look at the country of Somalia as a whole and what makes it so attractive as the next home for al Qaeda operations. It will conclude with an analysis of al Qaeda's recent links to the country and a synopsis of what should be done to counter the organization's ability to reemerge in Somalia.

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<sup>3</sup> James Phillips, "Somalia and Al-Qaeda: Implications for the War on Terrorism," *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder* No. 1526, (April 5, 2002), 1-12.



## History of al Qaeda in Somalia

### Operation Restore Hope

Famine and widespread starvation plagued Somalia in 1991-92, which prompted an emergency relief program and peacekeeping mission, UNOSOM.<sup>4</sup> In December 1992, President George H. W. Bush ordered the Pentagon to undertake Operation Restore Hope. This effort was launched to rescue the failing U.N. food relief program to Somalia. The humanitarian mission eventually involved 25,000 U.S. servicemen providing security and logistical support. Operation Restore Hope was seemingly successful in combating the famine conditions of Somalia.<sup>5</sup>

President William J. Clinton brought a different approach to the Somali effort. His administration expanded the short-term aid mission into a long-term nation-building drive governed by the United Nations. This approach led to unexpected results in Somalia. The fractious warlords of Somalia viewed this as foreign interference and were sternly opposed to the American presence in the country.<sup>6</sup>

General Mohammed Farah Aideed, a leading figure among all the warlords, initially welcomed the United Nations because he was able to exploit their efforts to increase his dominance in

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<sup>4</sup> Ken Menkhaus, *Somalia: State Collapse and the Threat of Terrorism* (London: Oxford UP, 2004), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Phillips, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Phillips, 3.

southern Somalia. However, General Aideed became hostile after U.N. peacekeepers attempted to disarm his militia. This gave Aideed the perception that the U.N. was favoring his archrival, Ali Mahdi Mohammed.<sup>7</sup>

Aideed launched a guerilla war to drive out the U.N. peacekeeping forces, which resulted in the ambush and murder of 25 Pakistani peacekeepers. The Clinton Administration deployed U.S. Special Forces to arrest General Aideed in Mogadishu on October 3, 1993. The mission backfired, resulting in the shooting down of two U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopters and 18 Army Rangers killed. This single battle produced the heaviest U.S. casualties since the Vietnam War. Also, in this fierce 19-hour firefight more than 1,000 Somalis were killed.<sup>8</sup>

This bungled mission became the turning point in America's intervention in Somalia. Unable to justify to America the horrific sacrifice witnessed in Somalia, the Clinton Administration reversed its decision and began to pull U.S. forces out of Somalia. It abandoned its nation-building campaign and withdrew all forces from the country by the end of March 1994. The United Nation peacekeeping effort was terminated in 1995 after failing to restore law and order.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Phillips, 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> Phillips, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Phillips, 4.

## **The Somali *Fatwa***

In 1993, bin Laden issued a *fatwa*<sup>10</sup> (religious edict) calling for Somalis to attack U.S. forces to drive them out of the country. He dispatched several lieutenants including Mohammed Atef, the mastermind behind the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. Al Qaeda members were sent there to train the Somalis in military and terrorist tactics. According to U.S. officials, bin Laden spent \$3 million to recruit and airlift elite veterans of the Afghan *jiḥād* to Somalia via third countries such as Yemen and Ethiopia. Several hundred foreign veterans of the Afghan *jiḥād*, expelled from Pakistan in 1993, also joined the Somali *jiḥād* after passing through Sudan. Other radical Yemeni mercenaries were brought to Somalia to fight as well.<sup>11</sup>

Though al Qaeda members orchestrated and oversaw much of the ambush in Somalia the primary fight was carried out by al Qaeda-trained Somalis. Al Qaeda's military leader, Abu Ubaydah al-Banshiri, directly supervised the operation.<sup>12</sup> The leaders set up a cell in Nairobi and used it to send weapons and trainers to the Somali warlords battling U.S. forces. Over a several month period leading up to the conflict numerous trainers flowed into Somalia including most of their senior

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<sup>10</sup> Phillips, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Phillips, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Anonymous, 94.

members and weapons training experts of al Qaeda's military committee. Al Qaeda trainers later boasted of their assistance to a Somali militia group, which led to the downing of the two helicopters and the subsequent withdrawal of U.S. forces in early 1994.<sup>13</sup>

### **Personal Claims Against the U.S. in Somalia**

In the wake of this ill-fated mission many theories as to its culpability arose. One that permeates throughout is the behind-the-scenes involvement of Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda organization. There are arguments back and forth as to the group's true involvement, but there is substantial evidence that al Qaeda was involved. Bin Laden, himself, has established a level of responsibility for the attacks and has made several public statements hinting toward his involvement. He alluded to just that in an August 1997 interview with *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*. Bin Laden stated, "U.S. soldiers showed their cowardice and feebleness during the Somali experiment." He continued, "The Americans are cowards and cannot confront me. If they even think of confronting me, I will teach them a lesson similar to the lesson they were taught a few years ago in Somalia." In another 1997 interview, bin Laden told Pakistani journalist

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<sup>13</sup> National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York, NY: Norton, 2004), 60.

Hamid Mirthat that his fighters caught a helicopter pilot and "tied his legs and dragged him through the streets." When ABC correspondent John Miller interviewed an unnamed al Qaeda fighter in May 1998, the operative told Miller that he claimed credit for "slitting the throats of three American soldiers in Somalia."<sup>14</sup>

Two Al Qaeda fighters currently held in U.S. custody gave even more direct admittance of culpability. Mohammed Sadiq Hawaida, an alleged Nairobi embassy bomber, told Pakistani authorities after his August 1998 arrest that he was one of "a select group of Arabs" sent in 1993 to Somalia to help General Aideed in his fight against U.S. forces. Hawaida, along with fellow captured al Qaeda member, Ali Muhammed admitted that bin Laden's forces were directly involved in downing a U.S. helicopter and in two attacks using land mines.<sup>15</sup>

## **The Current Picture of Somalia**

### **Somali Government**

Somalia is classified as a collapsed or failed state. Over the last 14 years no governing body has been able to exercise control over the country. Since January 1991 there has been no

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<sup>14</sup> Anonymous, 137.

<sup>15</sup> Anonymous, 136-137.

functional, central governing authority in Somalia. In August of 2000, the Transitional National Government was formed and exercised nominal administrative control over the country for nearly three years. Due to widespread internal schisms it formally ended its reign in August 2003.<sup>16</sup> The latest attempt at establishing a central government is a largely nonfunctional form of government brought into being in October 2004 and currently operating out of Nairobi, Kenya.<sup>17</sup>

### **Somali Factional Clannism**

Another important characteristic of Somalia is its chronic factional fighting along clan lines. Historically, Somalis have shown a fierce independence, an unwillingness to submit to authority, a strong clan consciousness, and conflict among clans and sub-clans despite their sharing a common language, religion, and customs. Clans are integral to Somali life. Clan consciousness has been described as centering around the struggle for recognition in all its forms - social, political, economic, cultural and status. Despite this clan consciousness, the Somali community historically preserved its basic unity because of the relative homogeneity of the society. After the

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<sup>16</sup> Menkhaus, 16-17.

<sup>17</sup> COL Craig S. Huddleston, USMC, Chief of Staff, Joint Task Force, Horn of Africa, "Irregular Warfare: CJTF-HOA Operations," Interview after lecture delivered to the 2004-2005 Command and Staff College Class of the Marine Corps University, Quantico, VA, 13 January 2005.

overthrow of Somalia's formal government in 1991, the country was cast into disarray. Rival clan leaders fought to seize control of the country. More than a dozen factions struggled for power. The clans in the northern part of the country gained autonomy and relative stability in the Somaliland and Puntland regions. The contrary was true in the south. Southern warlords engaged in a brutal civil war with General Mohammed Farah Aideed emerging as the dominant figure.<sup>18</sup>

This chronic fighting aggravated the humanitarian crisis. Already, the country was facing drought and economic despair. Farmers were unable to plant and harvest crops. An estimated 300,000 Somalis died of starvation during the early 1990s.<sup>19</sup> The UN initiated a relief operation but the Somali warlords ruthlessly plundered the food supplies to feed and subsidize their own militias.

### **Lawlessness And Criminality**

This is primarily the state of the country today. Intermittent armed conflict has plagued the nation as far back as 1988, three years before the fall of the government. There has been a paradigm shift in Somalia since 1999. Since then businessmen in Mogadishu who had previously paid local warlords

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<sup>18</sup> Phillips, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Ted Dagne, "Horn of Africa: War and Humanitarian Crisis," *Congressional Research Service, CRS Issue Brief No. 10056*, 19 September 2000.

in their clan, instead financed their own militias. This created a new dynamic. Quite often gunmen would fight for whomever paid the most, not for clan or cause.<sup>20</sup> In essence there was very little loyalty among the militiamen. They simply allied with those who had the largest money to offer.<sup>21</sup> This is particularly important because these militiamen can certainly be prime recruits for involvement in terrorist activity.

A direct result of Somalia's armed conflict is lawlessness and criminality. The collapse of the central government certainly presented the opportunity for this type of behavior. Roving gangs of young men terrorizing the populace was certainly a characteristic of the descent into lawlessness, but over the course of the 1990s this aspect changed. The clan system was used in lieu of a standing government to combat such conduct. The militia that terrorized the villages seemingly settled down but merely changed their modus operandi. They shifted to a higher form of crime resorting to taxation and extortion, protection racketeering and/or makeshift security.<sup>22</sup>

Lawlessness remains a serious problem in Somalia but not in the sense of street gangs and mafia. The country's top politicians and business leaders commit the vast majority of crimes. These are the very people the international community

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<sup>20</sup> Menkhaus, 30.

<sup>21</sup> Menkhaus, 28-31.

<sup>22</sup> Menkhaus, 31-32.



convenes for peace conferences and humanitarian relief. This includes inciting violence for political purposes, the embezzlement of foreign funds, the introduction of counterfeit currency, which by creating hyperinflation robs average Somalis of most of their earnings. These leaders also resort to land grab schemes, piracy and the export of charcoal, which is illegal and highly destructive to the environment. This criminal behavior tends to get less press than that of the common street hooligan.<sup>23</sup>

Another form of Somalia's criminality is kidnapping. Kidnapping falls into several different categories but the most common form is kidnapping for profit. Though the ransoms tend to be small, kidnapping has become a major criminal activity largely because it is currently one of the few profitable ventures for the street criminals. The targets are normally linked to a source of funds such as a job with an international agency or family members in the Diasporas. Somalis from weak or minority clans are especially vulnerable. Some armed gangs have come to specialize in kidnapping. Often times the gangs will pass the victims to a more powerful warlord for a fee.<sup>24</sup>

The lawlessness and criminality of Somalia presents fertile ground for individuals looking to further their cause. It would

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<sup>23</sup> Menkhaus, 33.

<sup>24</sup> Menkhaus 33-34.

be quite easy for a person or group looking to establish themselves in a social stream like that of Somalia. With these dynamics in place Somalia's underworld could be quite easy to tap into and gain prominence and influence. All that is required is a suitable connection to a group or faction that already has a foundation in the country.

### **Radical Islam in Somalia**

#### **Al-Ittihad al-Islamiya**

After the successful Afghan *jihad* against the Soviet Union in 1989, al Qaeda saw the United States as its next enemy. Bin Laden and his al Qaeda organization saw the U.N./U.S. mission in Somalia as the perfect opportunity to strike a blow against their new rival. At the time of the conflict the country was suffering through famine, lawlessness and a lack of government. Even in the midst of this al Qaeda could not simply mass migrate to the country and fight U.S. forces. The internal strife among the warring factions prevented this. So, al Qaeda needed ties inside the country to get established and to operate.

Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, many of the estimated 25,000 "Arab Afghans" returned home where they continued to foster their radical Islamic ideas in many Muslim countries including Somalia. According to U.S. intelligence

reports, bin Laden sent Islamic extremists to Somalia in 1991-92 to help the Somali Islamic radical group al-Ittihad al-Islamiya (AIAI) to organize an armed militia, establish schools and clinics, and prepare to seize power.<sup>25</sup> The AIAI was initially known as the Muslim Brotherhood, who emerged in the 1980s as one of at least seven different Islamic movements in Mogadishu.<sup>26</sup>

Al-Ittihad al-Islamiya was comprised mainly of educated young men who had studied or worked in the Middle East. They came to the conclusion that the only way to rid Somalia of all its problems was via political Islam. This mirrored many Islamic movements in the Middle East. The AIAI were very organized and sought to control many strategic sites such as seaports and commercial crossroads. They did just this in the Gedo region in the southwest part of the country near the border with Ethiopia and Kenya.<sup>27</sup>

In Gedo, al-Ittihad seized and maintained control of Luuq, a small but important commercial town. From 1991-96, AIAI governed the town and its surrounding environs. During their reign in Luuq some very important lessons were confirmed about the Islamic movement that up to this point were merely speculative. One lesson was that the AIAI had to win public support by providing sound responsive administration and

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<sup>25</sup> Phillips, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Menkhaus, 56.

<sup>27</sup> Menkhaus, 56-57.

effective rule of law. The residents of Luuq welcomed law and order as the primary virtue of the Islamic administration. Also, the low crime rate facilitated growth in business and commerce. This pattern of public response to Islamic law permeated throughout Mogadishu and south-central Somalia in the mid-to-late 1990s.<sup>28</sup>

### **AIAI and the Factious Groups**

Though it initially appeared that *sharia* rule of law was the compulsory answer to the lawlessness and disorder of the failed state, it did not survive without facing scrutiny and opposition. The public appreciation for Islamic rule declined quickly when the Islamists attempted to delve too far into social matters. The administration of Luuq under the Islamists was strict and in keeping with Islamic customs. Clannism among the constituency still existed and posed a daunting challenge for the Islamists.<sup>29</sup>

A *sharia* court administered justice based on Islamic law rather than traditional clan law. Many punishments such as amputation in response to the commission of a crime were imposed. This was not customary in Somalia. Other Islamic customs were forced upon the Somalis that clashed with their way

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<sup>28</sup> Menkhaus, 57.

<sup>29</sup> Menkhaus, 57.

of life. In the educational system courses were taught in Arabic and curriculums were written in Islam rather than in secular form. This began to create a gulf between Islam and the clans. In the end, Islamic rule in Luuq was embedded within clan customs and rule rather than superseding them. This was a prevailing issue across the country where Islamic rule was in authority.<sup>30</sup>

Another point of opposition to Islamic rule was from the warlords themselves. The factious warlords saw the AIAI's organized administration of the seaports and other key sites as the largest threat to their survival, more so than rival militias. International relief agencies were impressed by the honesty and organization of the Islamists, in direct contrast to that of the warlords who used the ports to divert food aid and extort the relief agencies. The Islamist's functionality as a cohesive governmental organization exposed the factions' indifference and incompetence. Also, the Islamists began to organize within, rather than across, clan lines. The clan-based factions viewed them as dangerous internal rivals. As violence and lawlessness continued AIAI became more threatening to the factions because they continued to promote and promise unity, justice and rule of law. Even though the country was devoid of all three facets, the Somalis remained skeptical of Islamic rule

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<sup>30</sup> Menkhaus, 57-58.

and remained attached to the clan as the sole source of protection.<sup>31</sup>

However, the cleft between tribal clannism and *sharia* law has recently been bridged by a very powerful and well-respected Islamic cleric, Sheikh Ali Dheere. Sheikh Ali Dheere is a prominent tribal member who is the leader of the *sharia* law system. Being both a Sunni Muslim and an indigenous Somali, Ali Dheere has substantial influence and credibility within Somalia's society. Through his strength and status, *sharia* law has seen a resurgence and has again become the closest representation of a central government in Somalia.<sup>32</sup>

### **The al Qaeda Connection**

The divergence between Islam and the factious clans appeared to pose a problem for the entrance of foreign Islamic fighters to Somalia. There was considerable disparity among the groups but one significant link did exist. The AIAI and General Mohammed Farah Aideed's faction staunchly opposed the UNOSOM peacekeeping effort. This served as a lightning rod for action against the U.S./UN forces in Somalia and a segue for foreign Islamic access to the country.

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<sup>31</sup> Menkhaus, 56-57.

<sup>32</sup> Huddleston, 13 January 2005.

Al Qaeda seized this opportunity and began to actively engage the leading groups of Somalia. In order to secure a Somali base of operation, al Qaeda ambassadors focused on backing General Aideed's son Hussein and supporting al-Ittihad al-Islamiya. The political chaos and physical devastation in Somalia and the UN intervention made the groups eager for bin Laden's financial and military support as they competed for supremacy of Somalia.<sup>33</sup>

Without these vital connections al Qaeda would not have been able to exact its wrath upon the United States. If al Qaeda would have simply shown up in Somalia it would have had to contend with being outsiders who were drastically different in many ways than the native Somalis. Aside from ethnic differences, al Qaeda would also have had to overcome the conflict between its religion and the clan system that had lifelong roots in Somalia. The inroads established among the groups provided the necessary springboard from which they could operate.

Though there were indicators that this relationship was being forged prior to the ambush on the peacekeeping forces it went largely undetected until well after the operation was dissected and analyzed. The CIA later stated, "Information from sources confirms bin Laden's involvement." On June 8, 1998, the

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<sup>33</sup> Anonymous, 179.

U.S. Attorney General indicted Osama for his role in training the tribesmen who killed eighteen U.S. soldiers in Somalia in 1993.<sup>34</sup>

Because of the AIAI contempt towards UNOSOM forces, no delegates were allowed to visit or operate in Luuq. Under this veil, Arabs were allowed to periodically fly in via small aircraft to visit the Islamic administration. Many rumors surfaced of Sudanese support for AIAI in Luuq. This led to speculation that the town was being supported or used by foreign Islamic radicals.<sup>35</sup>

Mainly due to lack of knowledge, the withdrawal of U.S. forces in March 1994 prevented the U.S. from dealing a crippling blow to al Qaeda's plan to expand globally. The links that the organization had built in Somalia were not intended to be short-term but were established for a long-term effort in the country and region. The relationship had a threefold purpose. First, to expand its Somali base while attacking the U.S. forces operating there; second, to expand its liaison with the AIAI and other armed Islamist groups; and third, to reach out from Somalia and build its operations elsewhere in Africa.<sup>36</sup> This expanse was the primary focus but the American forces operating in Somalia and the nearby countries presented an added bonus for

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<sup>34</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda* (New York: Berkley PG, 2002), 206-208.

<sup>35</sup> Menkhaus, 60.

<sup>36</sup> Anonymous, 179.



the organization. According to U.S. intelligence, al Qaeda used Somalia as a regional base of operations, including preparations for the 1998 embassy bombings.<sup>37</sup>

## **Al Qaeda Since Operation Restore Hope**

### **The Sudan**

From late 1991, leading up to and after the incident in Mogadishu, al Qaeda continued to operate largely from its bases in the Sudan. Before then the organization operated and trained largely from its bases in Afghanistan and Pakistan. While in the Sudan, the group's financial base blossomed. Osama bin Laden established several businesses that brought in large revenues. Without government oversight and operating behind the cloak of legitimate businesses, the organization was able to fund and conduct large-scale terrorist operations worldwide.

The Sudan provided the safeguard of state sponsorship for bin Laden and his organization. He maintained a close relationship with the Sudanese government, intelligence agencies and the military. He provided large sums of money to foster and support these relationships to facilitate his group's ability to operate and train there without government interference or intervention. From Sudan, al Qaeda built a substantial

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<sup>37</sup> David Ottaway and Thomas Ricks, "Somalia Draws Anti-Terrorist Focus," *The Washington Post*, 4 November 2001, A22.

worldwide network with regional offices in New York, London, Turkey and other major areas. Through these offices al Qaeda members and members of other groups had the ability to tie into the network and receive guidance, finances and even refresher training in the Sudan.<sup>38</sup>

Some time after Operation Restore Hope, the United States government realized that al Qaeda had a significant hand in the ambush on the UN and American troops and soon came to the conclusion that the group sought to inflict further damage if able. The group continued to operate from its base in the neighboring Sudan until May 1996 when Western pressure caused the group to relocate back to Afghanistan. Although the organization had to conduct a hasty departure it did not dissolve the ties that it had established with African Islamic groups like the Somali group, AIAI.<sup>39</sup> Maintaining relationships like this will prove particularly vital in the group's reemergence in the region.

### **Return to Afghanistan**

Several attacks were mounted against the United States and its forces culminating in the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. These attacks caused a

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<sup>38</sup> Gunaratna, 43-47.

<sup>39</sup> Gunaratna, 14.

mobilization of forces that led to an all out war against al Qaeda forces and their Taliban host regime of Afghanistan.

Operation Enduring Freedom successfully removed the Taliban as the controlling authority of Afghanistan and dislodged and dispersed al Qaeda from their operating bases in the country. Prior to Operation Enduring Freedom, Osama bin Laden and his high-ranking lieutenants hid out in the mountainous regions of the country and orchestrated terrorist attacks all over the world. In a sense, the U.S. had them cornered. Post Operation Enduring Freedom, the group has been mangled and many left the country with their follow-on locations largely unknown. It is not even clear where the group's leader, Osama bin Laden, is currently hiding out.

### **Where Will al Qaeda Go Next?**

The answer to this question is quite elusive. Because of the aggressive actions taken toward the group, they have had to transform and operate differently. Since 9/11 al Qaeda has transformed from a traditional terrorist group into a global Islamic extremist movement with the ability to operate independently and autonomously worldwide. Though al Qaeda has experienced the transformation that required the organization to disperse and decentralize, the leadership and its primary operatives still require safe haven to be able to communicate,

coordinate and issue edicts to carry out its mission. The question remains, 'where is the next likely place the group's primary actors will settle?'

One likely place for al Qaeda is Somalia. Somalia is a coastal state in the Horn of Africa with a population of over 8 million people.<sup>40</sup> The country is primarily ungoverned, since the formal collapse of its central government in January 1991.<sup>41</sup> It is largely characterized by poverty, internal civil war, and lawlessness with factional warlords controlling the social-economic dynamics of the county. A new government of Somalia established in October 2004 operates out of Nairobi, Kenya leaving much of the local administration of the country fractionalized or nonexistent.<sup>42</sup> This coupled with the bond already established between al Qaeda and al Ittihad al Islamiya makes for fertile ground for the organization to reemerge and operate there.

Michael Scheuer, the former chief of the C.I.A.'s Osama bin Laden unit, speaking to the *New York Times*, argued that the Bush administration has not recognized this transformation. He also stated that the administration was mistaken in thinking that it could defeat the organization by simply arresting or killing its

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<sup>40</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "World Fact Book, Somalia: Population," URL: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publication/factbook/index.html> accessed 8 January 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Menkhaus, 16.

<sup>42</sup> Huddleston, 13 January 2005.

operatives. He further stated that the administration has made too much of the fact that two-thirds of the group's leadership has been killed or captured. Mr. Scheuer said that this figure was misleading; that number reflected the leadership in place as of September 11, 2001, but the group had since replaced them with fully capable successors.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, Mr. Scheuer discussed that al Qaeda was also providing regional support to Islamic rebellions around the world and that bin Laden also provided inspiration to Islamic extremists beyond al Qaeda's own membership. Mr. Scheuer said that the amount of punishment that the group suffered since 9/11 would have destroyed a traditional terrorist organization but because of the group's transformation it has been able to survive and continue to operate. From this standpoint the group has been largely decentralized and has the ability to tap into existent groups and inject its own rhetoric into them. In this sense, al Qaeda is akin to a parasite with multiple worldwide hosts.

Mr. Scheuer says an example of this parasitic nature is the U.S. invasion of Iraq. He states that this sparked further anti-American sentiment in the Arab world, which feeds into his theory.<sup>44</sup> Being able to operate without the need to garrison

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<sup>43</sup> James Risen, "Evolving Nature of Al Qaeda is Misunderstood," *The New York Times*, 8 November 2004, A18.

<sup>44</sup> Risen, A18.

troops and forces makes the task of locating and targeting the group that much more difficult. In its current mode the group can operate largely undetected by those looking to dismantle and destroy it.

One way that Western powers have tried to destroy the group is by targeting its financial base. Financing the organization's undertakings has become increasingly more difficult since the U.S. government and its partners' seizure of al Qaeda's traditional means of acquiring and moving money. This significantly disrupted the group's financial system. Al Qaeda has, however, developed a means to circumvent the traditional way through the *hawala*, or unregulated, banking system. This system is based on the exchange of promissory notes for cash and gold. Al Qaeda also copied the financial model and networks of the now defunct Bank of Credit and Commerce International, which collapsed in 1991. The Bank of Credit and Commerce International system was used extensively by the terrorists and their state sponsors.<sup>45</sup>

Another means that al Qaeda has employed is supplying each of its operatives with large initial sums of money and later supplementing them with money through wire transfers from relatives and other private parties.<sup>46</sup> The operatives can then

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<sup>45</sup> Gunaratna, 17.

<sup>46</sup> National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 215-253.

orchestrate and carryout their terrorist activities. This was the most effective method considering it raised little suspicion from those tracking the organization's financial dealings. This tactic made it extremely difficult for authorities to track group's money. In keeping with the *fatwa* and acting as seemingly unaffiliated entities, individuals could move and carry out plans and actions with little to no evidence connecting them to the organization.

The previous example best illustrates al Qaeda's use of foot soldiers. The use of foot soldiers has proven to be the most effective tool of al Qaeda's ability to decentralize and continue to operate. These are not foot soldiers in the traditional sense. The vast majority of al Qaeda's operatives are well-educated young men from well-to-do families who possess the means to conduct operations with very little support from the standing group.<sup>47</sup> This allows them to operate with near autonomy and with little threat from authorities seeking to dismantle the al Qaeda organization. In this constitution, al Qaeda can continue to survive and operate as long as they have the means to recruit facilitators of their rhetoric and inject their ideology into groups around the world.

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<sup>47</sup> Gunaratna, 35.

## Why Somalia Looks Attractive for al Qaeda

### Ease of Access

The successful execution of Operation Enduring Freedom conducted against al Qaeda and Taliban forces all but ruined Afghanistan as a place of refuge. Many of the forces that were not caught or killed are thought to have continued to operate between Afghanistan and Pakistan or to have totally left the area. The international war against terrorism and the worldwide manhunt for the leaders of the organization have made it quite difficult for al Qaeda members to gain sanctuary in an established country. Countries with protected borders and those that actively enforce immigration are particularly unattractive to an international renowned terrorist.

Physically speaking, Somalia provides the ease of asylum that an international terrorist would be looking for. First and foremost, it is a coastal state with a long shoreline, approximately 1,880 miles long and largely unprotected.<sup>48</sup> Coalition navies and coast guards make every attempt to prevent the potential entrance of terrorists and the importing and exporting of illegal goods in and out of the country. However, it is next to impossible to monitor every vessel that operates

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<sup>48</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "World Fact Book, Somalia: Geography," URL: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publication/factbook/index.html> accessed on 8 January 2005.



in the waters surrounding the Horn of Africa because of the jurisdictional boundaries between land and maritime assets.<sup>49</sup> This is certainly attractive for al Qaeda members fleeing Afghanistan looking for refuge in another land. Moreover, it is quite easy for al Qaeda members leaving Afghanistan to gain access to Somalia.

If al Qaeda members chose to leave Afghanistan, some might easily hide in containers transported by truck to a busy port and then be moved by a larger container ship to a smaller boat in the Indian Ocean or Gulf of Aden for later infiltration into Somalia. It has long been thought that al Qaeda has moved people and equipment in and out of Somalia by boat, particularly near Somalia's southern border with Kenya.<sup>50</sup> This point has caught the attention of several high-ranking U.S. officials. In a briefing on March 8, 2002, a senior member in the Department of Defense stated that Somalia was looked upon as a safe haven for al Qaeda members leaving Afghanistan. He stated that Somalia was a place where it would be appropriate for al Qaeda members to go if they were to flee Afghanistan. The unnamed official also said that there were special factors, which made Somalia a favorable environment for terrorists. Such factors as the lack of a fully functioning government for over a decade or

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<sup>49</sup> Huddleston, 13 January 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Ottaway and Ricks, A23.

more and the governmental security that comes along with it was of concern. Also, the country's long, porous border made it particularly attractive to terrorists infiltrating the country.<sup>51</sup>

This aspect of Somalia is particularly alluring to a terrorist regardless of their intent. Somalia presents an international terrorist the ability to remain in place once there or use the country simply to gain access to other countries in Africa. Whatever the desire Somalia is attractive and this is a major concern of high level U.S. official operating in the Horn of Africa region.<sup>52</sup>

#### **Absence of Law and a Centralized Government**

Somalia has a transitional government that was established in October 2004 and operates out of Nairobi, Kenya. This remote government faces huge credibility and control problems. Also, its absence makes it unable to mitigate the differences between tribal customs and a centralized government. Another challenge will be countering the growing strength and popularity that the Islamic *sharia* system has over the populace of the country. All these factors make it very difficult for the present shadow government to exercise control over the country.

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<sup>51</sup> Susan Ellis, "Somalia Potential 'Haven' for Terrorist," *Washington File*, 11 March, 2002, URL: <<http://usembassy.australia.state.gov/hyper/202/0311/epf108.htm>> accessed on 9 January 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Huddleston, 13 January 2005.

Unfortunately, with the absence of the government the *sharia* system is the closest form of control and authority. The problem is that this system has come into dominance and its leader, Sheikh Ali Dheere, has alleged ties to al Qaeda and other groups with international interest.<sup>53</sup> Also, through his power and influence, Ali Dheere has bridged the traditional gap between customary tribal law and the *sharia* system of law. This lays the groundwork for the reemergence of al Qaeda in Somalia and sets the stage for them to operate within and throughout the country. This has enormous implications in the recapitulation and rebuilding of the group's strength and structure.

### **Lack of Economic Base**

The lack of a functional economic base causes an increase in widespread criminal activity. Without government intervention and oversight this continues to be a growing problem, particularly in crime for profit schemes i.e. kidnapping. Kidnapping is one of the most lucrative undertakings in Somalia. This being the case, the inoculation of money into the societal underpinnings of Somalia can go a long way in establishing a group or individual's credibility, loyalty and status. This aspect alone can be attractive for al Qaeda members looking for refuge.

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<sup>53</sup> Huddleston, 13 January 2005.

Capital rules in Somalia and buys the loyalty of the indigenous people. Unfortunately, the terrorists have more of a segue into Somali culture and way of life than does the coalition forces. Not only do the terrorist possess the money to buy the allegiances, but they also have the common bond of religion and to a lesser extent culture.

The U.S. commander operating in the region recognizes this very point. In Somalia, it is acknowledged that loyalty goes to the highest bidder. Therefore, instead of establishing alliances with money, The CJTF-HOA attempts to do it through community development and helping the Somali people sustain themselves. The U.S. forces in Somalia give the people something more tangible than money by building hospitals and schools and inoculating farm animals. The tactic seems to work. Several long-standing allegiances have been developed from this as opposed to the short-term ones built from money.<sup>54</sup>

### **Previously Established Relationships**

The fact that Somalia is a coastal state with a long porous shoreline and devoid of a central government to enforce stability and economic growth make it considerably attractive for al Qaeda to enter the country and prosper as an organization. However, there is another significant reason why

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<sup>54</sup> Huddleston, 13 January 2005.

Somalia is appealing for the group. That is its familiarity and pre-established relationships it has fostered with the Somali Islamic group al-Ittihad al-Islamiya and the groups growing influence in the country.

Before relocating to Afghanistan, al Qaeda had cells throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and links to AIAI and the leading Somali faction leader Mohammed Aideed and his son and successor, Hussein Aideed.<sup>55</sup> These relationships were built to continue the spread of their ideology and strengthen their global network. Operationally, this makes the organization's potential return easily facilitated.

The most significant aspect that sets the stage for al Qaeda's potential return is the growing potency of the AIAI and the Islamic legal system in Somalia. Al-Ittihad al-Islamiya was formed on Islamic principles and in accordance with the *sharia* system of law. As the only structured form of authority in the country the AIAI and its *sharia* system is becoming more depended upon to breed and foster stability in the country. The link that bonds the two is Sheikh Ali Dheere, the country's leading cleric and leader of the *sharia* legal system. Sheikh Ali Dheere is very powerful and has managed to moderate the differences in *sharia* law and tribal customs, an accomplishment never before achieved in the country. In a country of lawlessness and

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<sup>55</sup> Anonymous, 179.

disorder, the people have grown to embrace and appreciate the *sharia* system of law.<sup>56</sup>

A relationship with Sheikh Ali Dheere is particularly important because of his strength and influence as leader of the *sharia* system in Somalia. Sheikh Ali Dheere is quite possibly the most powerful Sunni Muslim in the country. Also, he has the respect and authority necessary to mitigate the differences between Islamic law and tribal customs.<sup>57</sup> With al Qaeda associating itself with such a respected individual makes their entrance into the country that much easier and this connection gives them the leverage needed to gain credibility and recognition throughout the country.

Given the likelihood and the current environment of Somalia some still argue against the notion that the group could resurface there. The most common argument is that the members are not indigenous and would not be welcomed by the Somali people. A possible counter-argument is that the very nature of Somalia's environment makes it more feasible for a foreign organization to infiltrate, exist there, and even thrive.

Considering the transformation of the organization and Somalia's current state of lawlessness, lack of central government, nonexistent economic base and factious clans make it

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<sup>56</sup> Huddleston, 13 January 2005.

<sup>57</sup> Huddleston, 13 January 2005.

a prime place for al Qaeda's next home base. Also, infusing a society of this sort with a continuous flow of revenue can significantly boost the group's power base and buy the needed security from the native population. The group was able to achieve sanctuary in countries like Sudan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan where each had established governments and relative functional economies. Seemingly, the group will be able to accomplish the same in Somalia.

Another key point is that the predominant religion in Somalia is *Sunni* Muslim.<sup>58</sup> While this does not have the same clout as being part of a native clan it does carry considerable weight when trying to establish a connection with portions of the indigenous population. Also, this gives al Qaeda another credible link to the influential Somali Islamic group, AIAI and the powerful leader of the *sharia* law system, Sheikh Ali Dheere.

### **Evidence of Recent al Qaeda Links to Somalia**

Are there active al Qaeda cells in Somalia? It is difficult to determine. One reason is that American forces operating in the region are limited in their operations within the country. The operating forces of Joint Task Force, Horn of Africa are restricted to conducting humanitarian and stability

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<sup>58</sup> Huddleston, 13 January 2005

missions to the surrounding countries with limited operations just inside the borders of Somalia.<sup>59</sup> In spite of the partial access, evidence does exist that illustrates al Qaeda's influence in the country.

The most recent proof of this occurred in a May 2003 Kenyan embassy bomb plot that was described by Salmin Mohammed Khamis. Khamis, a Kenyan, said that al Qaeda operatives planned to attack the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi with a truck bomb and a hijacked plane loaded with explosives. He also deciphered a coded email from Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, a key al Qaeda operative suspected in carrying out a deadly hotel bombing near Mombassa, Kenya in 2002. Khamis said he, two unidentified Somalis and one unidentified Arab attended a meeting of al Qaeda operatives in May 2003 to plan the embassy bombing. Kenyan officials subsequently banned all flights to and from Somalia from June 20<sup>th</sup> through July 8<sup>th</sup> 2003.<sup>60</sup>

Another example of al Qaeda's link to Somalia occurred in the federal grand jury indictment of a Somali national in an al Qaeda terrorist plot to blow up a Columbus, Ohio shopping mall. Nuradin M. Abdi was indicted in U.S. District Court on charges of conspiracy, fraud and misuse of documents. There is further evidence that Abdi traveled back to Ethiopia in April 1999 and

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<sup>59</sup> Huddleston, 13 January 2005.

<sup>60</sup> Matthew Rosenberg, "Kenyan Tells of Plot to Bomb Embassy," *The Washington Post*, October 25, 2003, A17.



March 2000 to receive training in radio usage, guns, guerrilla warfare and bomb making.<sup>61</sup> This is confirmation that the group had maintained some sort of influence in Somalia.

Yet another illustration of al Qaeda's involvement in Somalia is the seizure of al Barakaat. Al Barakaat is the country's major money transfer and telecommunications company. It was alleged that the company funneled money to al Qaeda. The U.S. indicted two Somali men who ran a money-wiring office out of Alexandria, VA. Abdirahman Sheikh-Ali Isse and Abdillah S. Abdi were both charged with wiring more than \$7 million to al Barakaat's headquarters in the UAE. In an attempt to circumvent the IRS reporting requirements and thwart the appearance of money laundering the wired amounts were always less than \$10,000. Abdi told the U.S. District Judge that people typically sent \$50 to \$500 to a family member in Somalia, Kenya or Ethiopia.<sup>62</sup>

These illustrations show that al Qaeda has a possible base of operatives in Somalia and has the potential to further project influence into the country. Without the need to formally stand up and man large facilities it would be very easy for group to operate there. Conceivably, a small number of key

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<sup>61</sup> Jerry Seper, "Somali Indicted in Al Qaeda Bomb Plot," *The Washington Times*, June 15, 2004, A3.

<sup>62</sup> Tom Jackman, "Two Men Sentenced in Wiring of Money to Bin Laden Backer," *The Washington Post*, 12 September 2002, A29.

members could migrate to Somalia and continue to effectively operate.

Since the group's transformation, orders have been carried out through websites, through clerics, al Qaeda sympathizers, and the news media. It has been seen that anytime the leaders want to carry out orders they send out cryptic messages via videotape. As soon as the tape is released it is aired on practically every news network. Though seemingly newsworthy and innocent this is an effective way for the group to continue to operate in its current mode.

### **What Must Be Done to Stop the Resurgence?**

#### **Somalia's Neighbors**

Certain steps must be taken to prevent the likelihood of Somalia becoming an asylum for al Qaeda and its operatives. In Somalia's unstable environment the group certainly could thrive if left unchecked. The threat must be worked from within as well as from without. The U.S. and its allies are making every effort to hamper the group's ability and desire to enter the country. Aggressive coastal patrols by the U.S. and other foreign navies and coast guards make it increasingly difficult to gain access into the country via the sea. Of course, this does

not give a one hundred percent guarantee that all infiltrators will be stopped but it does offer due diligence.

Preventing migration to Somalia by land and air proves very challenging, something only theatre security cooperation may achieve. The ongoing cooperation carried out by the allied joint task force and countries in the region make it less appealing for al Qaeda to gain access to Somalia via land or air. Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa forces have made extensive progress in the countries surrounding Somalia. Currently, there is no way to accurately assess the effectiveness inside Somalia but through presence and cooperation in the neighboring nations it seems that potential threats have been minimized.<sup>63</sup>

This appears to be the right approach. Ownership is the most vital asset in combating the flow of transnational terrorism. In order to curtail the potential inside Somalia and throughout the region, the surrounding countries must actively seek to uncover and destroy terrorist organizations. These surrounding states must also beef up their efforts to police and secure the borders to stop the infiltrations of the groups. The nations must focus less on internal affairs and become more cognizant of regional matters.

The Bush Administration recognizes this and understands that the continent needs help with the issue. The

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<sup>63</sup> Huddleston, January 13, 2005.

Administration's 2002 national security strategy encourages collective security and the support of other countries in addressing Africa's regional problems. It argues that Africa's capable states and organizations must be strengthened to counter the threat.<sup>64</sup> In July 2003, the State Department released a statement amplifying President Bush's strategy for Africa. The plan stated that Africa's great size and diversity requires a security strategy that focuses on bilateral engagement and builds coalitions of the willing. The Administration declared that it would focus on three interlocking pillars for the region: 1) Countries with major impact on their neighborhood such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia are anchors for regional engagement and require focused attention. 2) Coordination with allies, friends and international institutions is essential for constructive conflict mediation and successful peace operations; and 3) Africa's capable reforming states and sub-regional organizations must be strengthened as the primary means to address transnational threats on a sustained basis.<sup>65</sup>

In 2003, President Bush demonstrated his commitment to this policy by pledging \$100 million to help East African countries improve their counter-terrorism efforts. Also since late 2002, the U.S. committed 1800 troops to Djibouti operating under the

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<sup>64</sup> United States Department of State, *"The National Security Strategy of the United States,"* 11 September 2002.

<sup>65</sup> United States Department of State, *"An Overview of President Bush's African Policy,"* 11 July 2003.

command of CJTF-HOA. These forces were heavily involved in counter-terrorism operations. Prior to this, President Bush saw no strategic interest of Africa to the United States but in 2003 he considered sending troops to Liberia to ward off al Qaeda threats. According to an April 2003 report put out by *Global Witness*, al Qaeda purchased diamonds in Liberia and Sierra Leone to fund terrorist operations.<sup>66</sup>

While this commitment is certainly a starting point the true focus must be on the stability of the African nations. The vulnerabilities that exist in these nations must be eradicated in order to build a true antiterrorism strategy. The strategy must first tackle the poverty, criminality, lawlessness and instability that can give rise to fundamentalist militancy. These are the very sources that al Qaeda seeks to target in order to gain a foothold.

The introduction of revenue into these countries and helping them to strengthen their economies can certainly lead to stability. The United States sought base or military refueling agreements with several African countries.<sup>67</sup> This means of introducing capital to a country can certainly bolster the economy of a supporting nation. This can help build credibility and acceptance within the host nation. Also, it gives the

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<sup>66</sup> Nicole Itano, "Terror Threat Raises U.S. Interest in Africa," *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 July 2003.

<sup>67</sup> Itano, 8.

country added security and assurance knowing that the United States military is committed and will be there to provide long lasting support.

*One such African country has answered the call to become a proactive partner in the regional fight against terrorism. In May 2004, Eritrea's Ambassador Girma Asmerom made it widely known that his country places great value on its anti-terrorism partnership with the United States. He further stated that his country would do all in its power to support President Bush's efforts to build a worldwide coalition against killer networks like al Qaeda.*<sup>68</sup>

In a May 26, 2004 speech at a National Press Club "Newsmaker" program, Ambassador Asmerom told journalists, "In line with our commitment and contributions to fight terrorism, Eritrea sees itself as linked with the world and the United States in the noble cause to defeat fundamentalism and global terrorism." The ambassador noted that the problem is not new to Eritrea, where "wanton acts of terrorism that destroy lives and property and undermine development have been occurring since 1991." Now, he said, the country has become a target for "al Qaeda and other terrorist groups...to attempt to infiltrate Eritrea's borders." He went on to say that al Qaeda networks

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<sup>68</sup> Jim Fisher-Thompson, "Eritrea Values Anti-Terrorism Partnership With U.S.," *International Custom Wire*, 28 May 2004.

were responsible for the ruthless and brutal murder of five Belgian tourists in 1996 and more recently the murder of British mining expert, Timothy Nutt, in Bisha near the Sudanese border in April 2003. Ambassador Asmerom also said al Qaeda was responsible for a hotel bombing in Tessenei in 2004.<sup>69</sup> Tessenei is located in the western part of Eritrea, approximately 158 miles west of Asmara.

The country has certainly lived up to its promise. It offered the use of its facilities along its 1,200-kilometer Red Sea coastline, two major deep-water ports in Assab and Massawa, and the new airport near the port of Massawa. The airport can accommodate any size airplane and provides blanket flyover rights.<sup>70</sup> This indicates a strong step in the direction of combating terrorism in the region. This cooperation is exactly what is required to further the fight against transnational terrorism. Eritrea stands as the first African country that has taken this crucial step.<sup>71</sup>

### *Strengthen Neighboring Militaries*

The second part to the African strategy is concentrating on the enhancement of the militaries of the continent. Realizing that large-scale U.S. combat forces may not necessarily be

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<sup>69</sup> Fisher-Thompson, 28 May 2004.

<sup>70</sup> Fisher-Thompson, 28 May 2004.

<sup>71</sup> Fisher-Thompson, 28 May 2004.

desirable in some countries, the allies in the fight against terrorism must place a premium on training, equipping and supporting the African militaries. Support such as ISR capabilities, air and naval support, communication equipment and logistical training must be provided to get the countries to a level of proficiency that will give them the ability to counter the terror threat in the region. This is absolutely necessary because the regional militaries must be a strong physical mechanism in the fight against terrorism.

Another key aspect in the enhancement of the African militaries' ability to respond in times of crisis. The British government is well versed in this area. The United States and Great Britain should work together to facilitate and train regional African forces to respond to emergent situations.<sup>72</sup> Leading African nations should be trained and equipped to take on peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Given the state of many of the African nations this appears to a significant applicability, realizing that fundamentalism can easily spawn from civil and social unrest.

Africa has the necessary military manpower to meet its security needs. The problem is that the forces are either corrupt, ill trained, and tend to be used to attack neighboring

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<sup>72</sup> James Jay Carafano and Nile Gardiner, "U.S. Military Assistance for Africa: A Better Solution." *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder No. 1697*, 15 October 2003, 8.



countries rather than help in regional matters. The best approach to this is to assist African allies to get their internal situations together so that the militaries can concentrate on regional concerns. The U.S. must provide the countries with advisory and technical assistance along with more international military education and training.<sup>73</sup> This course of action will make the nations more aware of their own abilities, which will give them greater confidence when working with coalition and regional partners.

### **In Conclusion**

Post September 11, 2001, the United States, in concert with several other nations, embarked upon a global effort to root out al Qaeda and its affiliates. The result was an all-out war against terrorism and any state actors willing to support such. The fallout was the physical dislodgement and dispersing of the al Qaeda organization throughout the world.

After Operation Enduring Freedom much of al Qaeda's tangible ability has been dissolved but it still possesses the capability to function and project its influence worldwide. The group's beliefs and rhetoric are very much alive and can be injected into smaller less recognizable groups. Realizing this,

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<sup>73</sup> Carafano and Gardiner, 8.

the question remains, 'where will the leadership and primary operatives of the organization go next?'

The most obvious answer is a territory or region that is largely ungoverned with characteristics that make it attractive to the group. A place that is conducive for them to easily settle in and gain the support of the populace. Furthermore, a place that is quite familiar with pre-established longstanding relationships.

Somalia seems to be that place. It is very attractive and appears to have all the trappings that al Qaeda leaders needs for safe haven. However, it is vitally important that the organization not be able to reconstitute there. To counter any such move, the organization must be kept off balance and on the run. This will certainly increase al Qaeda's susceptibility to defeat. Operating in purely a survival mode also keeps them on the defensive and less likely to conduct terror strikes.

Staying a step ahead of the organization is the best weapon in the war on terrorism. This is the approach taken by the Bush Administration and its allies in the Global War on Terrorism. Al Qaeda and its allies have been actively sought out and pursued. This is the fifty percent solution. The other half is the engagement and support of those regions that appear susceptible to fundamentalist influence. The focus must engage the three primary divisions of society - the government, the

military and the populace. This must occur across all social barriers in any country that the group may seek to hide. Complete public buy-in and ownership is the only way this fight will be won.

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